IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Original): A sputtering target prepared by the butt joining of metal sheets being made of the same material, wherein an intermetallic compound in a joined portion has an average particle diameter of 60% to 130% of the average particle diameter of the intermetallic compound in a non-joined portion.

Claim 2 (Original): A sputtering target prepared by the butt joining of metal sheets being made of the same material, wherein the average distance between adjacent intermetallic compound particles in a joined portion is 60% to 130% of the average distance between adjacent intermetallic compound particles in a non-joined portion.

Claim 3 (Original): A sputtering target prepared by the butt joining of metal sheets being made of the same material, wherein the average of the grain diameter of metallic crystals in a joined portion is 20% to 500% of the average of the grain diameter of metallic crystals in a non-joined portion.

Claim 4 (Original): A sputtering target prepared by the butt joining of metal sheets being made of the same material, wherein no dendritic structure is generated in a joined portion.

Claim 5 (Currently Amended): The sputtering target according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 4~~ claim 1, comprising one element selected from the group consisting of aluminum, an aluminum alloy, copper, a copper alloy, silver, and a silver alloy.

Claim 6 (Currently Amended): The sputtering target according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 4~~ claim 1, comprising a planar area of 1 m^2 or more.

Claim 7 (Original): A method for preparation of a sputtering target comprising a step of joining metallic materials being made of the same material by friction stir welding.

Claim 8 (Original): The method for preparation of a sputtering target according to claim 7, wherein the moving distance of a rotating tool is 0.3 to 0.45 mm per revolution to perform the joining.

Claim 9 (Original): The method for preparation of a sputtering target according to claim 7, wherein annealing is performed after the joining.

Claim 10 (Original): The method for preparation of a sputtering target according to claim 7, wherein a metallic material prepared by spray forming is used.

Claim 11 (Currently Amended): A sputtering target prepared by the method according to ~~any one of claims 7 to 10~~ claim 7.

Claim 12 (New): The sputtering target according to claim 2, comprising one element selected from the group consisting of aluminum, an aluminum alloy, copper, a copper alloy, silver, and a silver alloy.

Claim 13 (New): The sputtering target according to claim 3, comprising one element selected from the group consisting of aluminum, an aluminum alloy, copper, a copper alloy, silver, and a silver alloy.

Claim 14 (New): The sputtering target according to claim 4, comprising one element selected from the group consisting of aluminum, an aluminum alloy, copper, a copper alloy, silver, and a silver alloy.

Claim 15 (New): The sputtering target according to claim 2, comprising a planar area of 1 m^2 or more.

Claim 16 (New): The sputtering target according to claim 3, comprising a planar area of 1 m^2 or more.

Claim 17 (New): The sputtering target according to claim 3, comprising a planar area of 1 m^2 or more.

Claim 18 (New): A sputtering target prepared by the method according to claim 8.

Claim 19 (New): A sputtering target prepared by the method according to claim 9.

Claim 20 (New): A sputtering target prepared by the method according to claim 10.